



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Shana Jones, Special Assistant
Daryl Fields, Public Information Officer
(210) 384-7440

June 17, 2004

***LOCAL OFFICIALS TEAM UP WITH NATIONAL LEADERSHIP
TO REDUCE GUN CRIME IN OUR COMMUNITY***

**Federal Gun Crime Prosecutions Hit Record Highs,
While Violent Crime Rate Hits 30-Year Low**

(San Antonio, Texas) The national Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) conference met this week in Kansas City, Missouri and included a 10-person delegation from the Western District of Texas. Attorney General John Ashcroft spoke to over 1,150 federal, state, and local prosecutors, law enforcement officials, community leaders, and other members of the PSN teams from across the nation who came together to discuss efforts to reduce and prosecute gun crime. PSN is President Bush's comprehensive initiative to combat gun crime in America by providing locally-based programs with the tools and resources they need to succeed.

"Through Project Safe Neighborhood's unprecedented partnership of state, local and federal leaders, we are turning the tide on gun crime," said Attorney General John Ashcroft. "We are taking gun-wielding criminals off our streets. The last three years represent a record of great success, but working together, we can do even more to make our neighborhoods safe."

"Gang members, drug dealers and ex-cons carrying guns represent a tremendous danger to our communities," said United States Attorney Johnny Sutton. "Through Project Safe Neighborhoods, law enforcement is committed to finding these criminals and ensuring that they are arrested, prosecuted and sentenced to hard time. The message is strong and clear, if you illegally possess or use a firearm, you are going to prison."

Federal Gun Crime Prosecutions Have Increased Significantly Every Year Under Project Safe Neighborhoods. From FY 2000 to FY 2003, federal firearms prosecutions increased by 68%. In FY 2003, the Justice Department filed over 10,500 federal firearms cases—the highest number ever recorded by the Department. The number of defendants charged with federal gun crimes rose from approximately 10,600 to over 13,000 from FY 2002 to FY 2003, a record increase of almost 23%. These figures are the highest on record in a single year since the Department began recording this information. In FY 2003, nearly all—93%—of convicted defendants, who were originally charged with federal firearms offenses, were sentenced to some time in prison for convictions on firearms charges or other charges. 72% were sentenced to more than three years in prison, and over half of all defendants convicted were sentenced to more than five years in federal prison. State and local prosecutions have also increased.

— more —

Project Safe Neighborhoods Is Working In Austin, San Antonio, Waco, Midland, El Paso and other communities across the Western District of Texas. United States Attorney Johnny Sutton, working side by side with state and local law enforcement, prosecutors and other community leaders, has created a PSN strategy to fit the unique gun crime problem in the Western District of Texas. Criminals who use guns are prosecuted under federal, state, or local laws, depending on which jurisdiction can provide the most appropriate punishment. In the past three years, the number of defendants prosecuted in the federal courts in the Western District of Texas has doubled.

Project Safe Neighborhoods results in the Western District of Texas.

- On June 9, 2004, three-time convicted felon Daniel Eugene Thurston, age 38 of Waco, was sentenced to 17 years in federal prison after stealing a 12-gauge shotgun, pawning it, then using the proceeds to buy drugs.
- On June 4, 2004, Ivan Rene Porras, age 19 of Odessa, was sentenced to 25 years in federal prison for using a 12-gauge shotgun during a drive-by shooting that resulted in the death of a 22-year-old Odessa man. His two co-defendants are currently serving 10-year and 8-year federal prison sentences. All three pled guilty to being a drug user in possession of a firearm and use of a firearm in relation to a crime of violence.
- On February 19, 2004, admitted Republic of Texas member Troy Dayton Fuller, age 39 of Arlington, Texas, was sentenced to 18 years in federal prison after federal authorities in Sierra Blanca, Texas, discovered that the three-time convicted felon and armed career criminal was traveling while in possession of a .380 caliber pistol.
- On January 29, 2004, 27-year-old Roberto Lopez-Urbina was sentenced to 71 years in federal prison for committing three carjackings in Travis and Williamson counties. Lopez-Urbina, the gunman, acted under the direction of co-defendant Raul Badillo-Rangel. Lopez-Urbina would deliver the automobiles to Badillo-Rangel who would then switch the license plates, secure bogus "buyer's orders" for the vehicles and then drive the cars to Mexico. On March 9, 2004, 40-year-old Badillo-Rangel was sentenced to 67 years in federal prison.
- In San Antonio, 34-year-old Jesus Humberto Salinas, an armed career criminal, is currently serving a 15-year federal prison term for being a convicted felon in possession of a firearm. Authorities arrested Salinas outside a nightclub after determining that Salinas and the mother of his 3 year old and 1 year old had left the children unattended inside their vehicle. Authorities discovered a .25 pistol on the dash and a .357 revolver concealed under the infant's car seat .

Project Safe Neighborhoods Has Contributed to Decreasing the Violent Crime Rate to Its Lowest Levels in 30 Years, But Reducing Gun Crime Remains an Important Goal. The violent crime rate is now at its lowest level since 1973, when the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics started collecting criminal victimization data. The violent crime rate for the first two years of the Bush Administration (2001-2002) was nearly 21% lower than for 1999-2000. The per capita number of violent crimes involving firearms has dropped 14% in 2001-2002, from 1999-2000. There were approximately 64,000 fewer gun crimes and approximately 12% (almost 130,000) fewer victims of gun crime in 2001-2002, than in 1999-2000.

Project Safe Neighborhoods Takes a Multifaceted Approach to Reducing Gun Crime. Gun crime reduction is President Bush's top domestic criminal justice initiative, and the Bush Administration has devoted over \$1 billion to Project Safe Neighborhoods in its first four years (FY 2001 to FY 2004). The funds have been used to hire new federal, state, and local prosecutors, provide training, hire research and community outreach support, and develop and promote effective prevention and deterrence efforts. Each of the 94 federal judicial districts engages in deterrence and prevention efforts through community outreach and media campaigns and ensures that law enforcement and prosecutors have the training they need.

The PSN conference is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice. To find out more about PSN and its local programs, visit the PSN website at www.psn.gov.

#####